

Introduction

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Figure 0.1. As Far As Isolation Goes.

Source: Tania El Khoury and Basel Zaraq. Image: Marcia Chandra, 2018.

Intersecting histories and contemporary reverberations of colonialism and war have shaped global experiences of citizenship. On both sides of the Atlantic and in the global south, the rise of right-wing populism, the intensification of nationalist rhetoric and the concomitant proliferation of racist and xenophobic sentiments and policies have given rise to a politics of resentment, animosity and fear. In Europe, the incongruity between national and European discourses and practices of citizenship, sharpened by recurring, seemingly intractable social, political and economic crises, has added a dimension of precarity, volatility and intensity to the experience of both citizenship and democracy.

On all sides of this map, these circumstances have given rise to hostility, trauma, despair and heartbreak, but also to courage, resilience and creativity.

The confluence of these has meant that citizenship and democracy have been fiercely contested, with struggles acquiring both a sense of unprecedented urgency, if not an existential proportion. This volume explores the contribution and insights of artists and cultural actors with diverse experiences of migration and displacement to these fractious public debates. Focussing on performative, participatory, autobiographical and autoethnographic artistic processes and practices, it considers the contribution these artists make to radically reimagining the cartographies of democratic citizenship.

Artistic practice, and the transdisciplinary tools and techniques associated with creative processes of production, have been increasingly recognised as powerful methods for engaging publics on urgent or contentious social, cultural and political issues. Participatory and performative art, in particular, disrupts the conventional distinctions and hierarchies between artist and audience, but also the dominant canon and inherited power structures of art institutions. It is also often premised on the co-creation and collaborative element of the artwork, and thereby, the co-creation of knowledge. Initiatives such as *Who Are We?* (whoareweproject.com) and *Picturing Climate* (picturingclimate.net) at Tate Modern's Tate Exchange programme (<https://www.tate.org.uk/tate-exchange>), to which some of this volume's authors have contributed and which prompted many of the critical insights developed here, have served as spaces and vehicles for such engagement. Many of the artists whose work is being foregrounded also form part of a deeper network of creative and political alliances between artists, activists, academics and advocates working with and alongside the arts agency Counterpoints Arts (<https://counterpointarts.org.uk/>). By centring socially engaged practice as a catalyst for change, this volume aims to highlight what Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls an increasingly vital "ecology of knowledge" found in the "unsettling alchemy of art and social justice."

Collectively, these and other participatory and performative interventions serve as a radical methodology for collaborative, engaged, affective and effective social action. Situated in the context of this artistic practice and literature, this volume explores the specific contribution of artists shaped by migration and diverse conditions of displacement to reimagining the parameters of citizenship and democracy, and in so doing, to the production of radical democratic citizenship.

The volume foregrounds the work of artists who are shaped by migration and displacement for two fundamental reasons: First, many of these artists have audaciously inserted themselves into and are pushing the boundaries of controversial political debates, challenging and unhinging dominant interpretations of citizenship and belonging. Second, as the remainder of this introduction will suggest, critical interventions by artists who have experienced firsthand the everyday realities of displacement can offer a particularly

incisive challenge to existing regimes of citizenship and democracy. Often, though not always, excluded or marginalised by existing citizenship regimes (and the conflation of citizenship, belonging and democratic participation), but also by mainstream cultural and arts organisations, these artists are able to intervene from the complex terrain of the borderlands they often inhabit and thus navigate the centre. In so doing, they not only open up, but actually perform and enact a radical democratic citizenship.

The following discussion in this introductory chapter considers the construct of radical democratic citizenship and the contribution of artists who have migrated or are categorised as ‘refugees’ to its production. To do so, it first deconstructs radical democratic citizenship into its constituent parts. It tackles citizenship with the help of Engin Isin’s work on performative and activist citizenship and radical democracy with the help of Jacques Rancière. The chapter then turns to the critical contribution that artistic practice can make to the production of radical alternatives to the status quo. It does so, again, with the help of Rancière’s work, focussing on his understanding of the meaning and function of ‘critical art.’ It also begins to consider the practices of a constituency of artists who have migrated or have been forcibly displaced as a creative form and expression of ‘critical art,’ challenging existing regimes of citizenship and democracy and further enacting radical alternatives. The chapter concludes with an overview of the contributions to the volume, highlighting the common threads that emerge when these artists enact, install, perform or reflect upon the boundaries and horizons of radical democratic citizenship.

RADICAL + DEMOCRATIC + CITIZENSHIP

What is radical democratic citizenship, and how do artists with lived experience of migration and displacement contribute to its production? To begin to answer the question, this first section breaks radical democratic citizenship into its constituent parts, starting with the concept of citizenship. Isin provides a succinct yet comprehensive definition of citizenship, describing it as “a dynamic (political, legal, social and cultural but perhaps also sexual, aesthetic and ethical) institution of domination and empowerment that governs who citizens (insiders), subjects (strangers, outsiders) and abjects (aliens) are and how these actors are to govern themselves and each other in a given body politic.”¹ Here, citizenship is not, or not just, membership, but rather, “a relation that governs the conduct of (subject) positions that constitute it.”² It is an institution that constitutes and governs the conduct and conditions the possibilities of both citizens and non-citizens.

Understanding citizenship as a relation or series of relations that governs the conduct of citizens, non-citizens and the array of subject positions that

occupy the rest of the political spectrum enables us to imagine citizenship as being produced and performed (and thus also critically engaged with) by various subjects, including migrants and refugees, in different ways, and at different sites and scales. Isin has called the interventions that challenge, push the boundaries or reimagine the parameters of citizenship “acts of citizenship,” those who engage in them “activist citizens” and the result “activist citizenship.” For Isin, therefore, the subject position of “citizen” and the institution of “citizenship” is not necessarily predicated on membership in a polity. Rather, it is predicated on “subjects and objects . . . adopting modes and forms of being an insider . . . or challenging those modes and forms thereby transforming them.”³ Understood in this way, activist citizenship is thus always already radical, as it is predicated on those with “no-part” assuming or seizing “a part” and thereby challenging and transforming the parameters of democratic citizenship. This volume is specifically interested in how artists with experience of migration and the asylum system—“a part of those who have no-part”⁴—challenge and unsettle dominant interpretations of the parameters of citizenship and belonging through their artistic production.

For Isin, acts of citizenship are acts through which claims are articulated, and through which claimants produce new sites of contestation, belonging, identification and struggle.⁵ Acts of citizenship can stretch across boundaries and territories, and rupture and transform forms and modes of being political by bringing into being new actors and by creating new sites and scales of struggle.⁶ Unlike well-established and easily recognisable institutions and sites at which the subject position of citizen is traditionally enacted—a voting booth, a parliamentary debate, a town-hall meeting—Isin’s conceptualisation of acts of citizenship invites us to recognise a host of other sites and modes through which citizenship is performed and contested. For Isin and a number of contributors to this volume, “bodies, courts, streets, media, networks and borders have also become sites of contestation for citizenship.”⁷ Bojana Janković and Dana Olărescu (this volume) expose the bureaucracy governing migration, settlement and citizenship as one such site, and their comic, performative engagement with it as a mode of resistance. In her live art and chapter in this volume, Natasha Davis explores her own body as a site of such contestation. As Janković, Olărescu, Elena Marchewska and Abbas Zahedi’s contributions attest to, art galleries, cultural institutions and art itself have also become key sites of contestation over citizenship and democracy.

The performances or enactments of citizenship that Isin and the contributors to this volume explore break with existing habitus and routine, enabling the actor or actors (if only momentarily) to “create a scene rather than follow a script.”⁸ For Isin, this rupturing and transformative potential is not only the distinguishing feature of acts of citizenship, but also of activist citizens and activist citizenship; in contrast to active citizens, “who act out already written

scripts, such as voting, taxpaying or enlisting, activist citizens engage in writing scripts and creating the scene.”⁹ Acts of citizenship and activist citizens, therefore, “traverse frontiers” both physically and metaphorically.¹⁰ It might thus be useful from the perspective of this volume to think of artists shaped by histories of migration and displacement as activist citizens without, or traversing frontiers, whose interventions create “a series of resonances” that radically challenge the parameters of citizenship.¹¹

Having articulated how and to what effect the concept of citizenship is used throughout the volume, we now turn to radical democracy, or more accurately, to the concepts of radicalism and democracy as building blocks for thinking through the construct of radical democratic citizenship. Particularly useful in the context of this volume is the work of Jacques Rancière on the relationship between politics, democracy and art.

For Rancière, politics arises out of a contestation over the distribution of the sensible, or “the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it.”¹² As Patrick Craig elaborates, what is being distributed “are spaces, times, and forms of activity,” and their distribution, in turn, creates inclusions and exclusions.¹³ Rancière provides the following example of the inclusions and exclusions predicated on a particular distribution of the sensible:

Aristotle states that a citizen is someone who *has a part* in the act of governing and being governed. However, another form of distribution precedes this act of partaking in government: the distribution that determines those who have a part in the community of citizens. . . . The distribution of the sensible reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community. . . .¹⁴

The political community and our understanding of who has a part in that community, who belongs to it and who has the right to partake in its governance—in other words, our understanding of who is a citizen and who is not—is determined by the distribution of the sensible. Who is seen, heard or perceived, whose speech is discerned or discernable, is thus regulated by the distribution of the sensible.

Democracy, in turn, is a particular distribution of the sensible, a particular way of assembling people under a common authority and governing the contests that inevitably arise.¹⁵ Democracy, however, is also much more than this. As Jacques Derrida writes, democracy is the only system “in which, in principle, one has or assumes the right to criticize everything publicly, including the idea of democracy.”¹⁶ It is “the only one that welcomes the possibility of being contested, of contesting itself, of criticizing and indefinitely improving itself.”¹⁷ It is thus a “form of society in which men consent to live under the stress of uncertainty,” dependent as it is on perpetual self-transgression.¹⁸

Unlike any other system for the distribution of the sensible, democracy is thus simultaneously an organizing principle and its disruption. For Rancière, Panagia and Bowlby, “the ‘freedom’ of a people that constitutes the *axiom* of democracy has as its real content the rupture of the axioms of domination.”¹⁹ Democracy is a rupture and a disruption, “that state of supplement which is not controlled or counted in the count effected by the police.”²⁰ As democracy is also characterised by “the complete absence of qualifications for governing,” it is an explosion of “the people” onto the scene, a disruption of an existing distribution of the sensible by “the part of those who have no-part,” the *demoi* who “do not count, those who have no qualification to part-take...no qualification for being taken into account.”²¹ For Rancière, then, democracy is exceptional, a deviation and dissensus from the taken-for-granted order of things or distribution of the sensible, and thus, inherently radical.

THE TRANSFORMATIVE GROUND OF ‘CRITICAL ART’

What role, then, can migrant and refugee artistic practice play in this (radical) democratic moment? Rancière suggests that art can play a significant role in the contest over the distribution of the sensible. Artistic practice, he suggests, can intervene in the distribution of the sensible, in the system of “self-evident facts” that governs what (and who) is seen, heard, rendered visible, made invisible, included or excluded. It can constitute “‘ways of doing and making’ that intervene in the general distribution of ways of doing and making, as well as in the relationships it maintains to modes of being and forms of visibility.”²² For Rancière, however, the potential of artistic practice does not terminate here; significantly, it can also be activating and mobilising, inspiring and provoking a transformation of the existing distribution of the sensible.

Critical art, Rancière argues, “is an art that aims to produce a new perception of the world, and therefore to create a commitment to its transformation.”²³ It does so through a “conjunction of three processes: first, the production of a sensory form of ‘strangeness’; second, the development of an awareness of the reason for that strangeness and third, a mobilization of individuals as a result of that awareness.”²⁴ By intervening in the distribution of the sensible, by producing a sensory form of strangeness, by creating an awareness of the reasons for that strangeness and by mobilizing individuals as a result of this awareness, critical art can disrupt our inherited and seemingly self-evident understandings of the world around us and contribute to its transformation. Critical art can thus be seen as radically democratic: an intervention into the existing distribution of the sensible that exposes who has a “part” or a share in a political community and who does not. It challenges

us to reimagine the very grounds and parameters of that community, and to mobilise and act on that imagination.

It might be worth pausing briefly to reflect on what an artistic challenge to an existing distribution of the sensible might look like. If we circle back to the concept of citizenship, and specifically, to performative citizenship as delineated by Isin, we can perhaps imagine how artistic practice might reveal the exclusionary nature of existing legal and political citizenship regimes and enable us to imagine a radical alternative. In her chapter “Creative Acts of Citizenship: Performance of Activist Citizenship by Migrant Artists,” Marchewska explores Aram Han Sifuentes’s installation, *The Official Unofficial Voting Station: Voting for All Who Legally Can’t*, as precisely that kind of alternative. Conceived as a “citizen objection” to the exclusion of migrants from voting, the installation positioned migrants as citizens and invited them and other disenfranchised groups to participate by voting in the 2016 US presidential elections. Challenging also the arbitrariness of borders and noting that results of elections have cross-border implications, voting booths were installed on both sides of the US-Mexico border.

When produced by artists who, more often than not, have “no part” or have contested relationships with the institutions of citizenship, this kind of practice acquires a more deeply radical dimension. By demanding the rights reserved for citizens and inserting themselves into the institutions in which they have no part—such as voting—artists shaped by migration and displacement engage in a performative politics through which they enact themselves as citizens, and in so doing, challenge existing regimes of citizenship and democracy. When these artists also have no part in mainstream or state-sponsored cultural and arts organisations, their interventions invite a radical reimagining of both politics and culture. Thus, installations such as that analysed by Marchewska enact a more radical democracy, in which voting, for example, is differently activated and distributed. In critically intervening into the existing distribution of the sensible and enacting a parallel reality, the installation invites us to imagine the possibility of an alternative distribution of the sensible, a radical democracy of those who presently have no part, where citizenship and the right to have rights are very differently distributed, and the borders of political communities are reshaped.

By inserting themselves into debates and institutions in which they have no part and demanding the rights to which they have no right, these artists can enact a radical democratic citizenship. Through their art practice, they constitute themselves as citizens, audaciously inserting themselves “where they don’t belong” and partaking in that which they have no part of. In so doing, they expose the existing distribution of the sensible, challenge its taken-for-grantedness and disclose the possibility of another present. In the case

of *The Official Unofficial Voting Station*, Sifuentes exposes the exclusions and perversions of the contemporary institution of voting. By performatively partaking the right to which the disenfranchised and foreign nationals have no right, this artist's work and the communities she includes in her collaborative methodology enact a more radically democratic citizenship, allowing us to imagine that another distribution of the sensible is possible.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Many of the artists contributing to this volume work across the transdisciplinary field of socially engaged art practice; their projects are collaborative and participatory, involving communities and people as the essential material of the work.²⁵ What distinguishes much of this practice is its cooperative approach and the implementation of dramaturgy as a central trope, evoking what Isin calls "a dramaturgical language, combined with a language of performativity."²⁶ This critical mix of codes and strategies opens up sites and spaces for testimonials and dialogue between both citizens and non-citizens.

In foregrounding artists who have been shaped by migration and involuntary displacement, and the artefacts and performances through which they reimagine the cartographies of citizenship and belonging, the volume includes two distinctive textual formats. The first is a section comprising short provocations in which artists reflect on radical democratic citizenship in the light of their specific art practice and personal trajectories, situating themselves in relation to project participants and in the context of the cultural and civic/state institutions and public sites in which their work is staged and performed. These provocations are honed from the granular insights and particularities of the creative process itself, spanning and sometimes intermixing a range of art forms and methodologies including live art, visual art and public installation, community and site-specific durational work (in neighbourhoods) or the combination of writing, autoethnography and media activism. In "Four Thoughts in Two Voices and One Dodgy Passport," Bojana Janković looks back at her work as part of the *There There* collective to explore the role of comedy and site-specific performance in the interrogation of immigration and citizenship rules and policies. Janković describes *There There* as 50 percent Romanian and 50 percent Serbian, hence migrant in form, yet eschewing any prescriptive notion of autobiography as a fault line for the work. Whilst drawing attention to the political potential of artistic interventions, Janković also cautions against romanticising the interventions of artists with precarious citizenship status and points to the need for solidarity. "Radical citizenship is a liberating practice," Janković notes, "but it does not a legislative change make; I leave that to those with appropriate documentation."

In “Practicing Migration,” Dana Olărescu, the second member of the *There There* duo, focuses on her role as a “practicing migrant” and the performative interventions this has inspired. Reflecting on a *There There* performance at the Tate Modern (in the context of the *Who Are We?* programme at Tate Exchange) titled, *A 10-Minute Crash Course on How to Fill in a Permanent Residency Application*, Olărescu exposes the role that the art museum might play in consciously or unconsciously sustaining the ‘hostile environment’ against migrants in the name of ‘art.’ When performing a ‘how to’ apply for UK residency in the bowels of the gallery, Olărescu recounts how this enactment of radical democratic citizenship was engaged with by the audience—who immediately connected and participated—yet was frowned upon by the gallery. As she puts it: “When kept at bay in community centres, places of worship or diaspora institutions, we are tolerated; but should the conversation spill into the mainstream, into middle-class territories, minority solidarity is suddenly perceived as threatening.”

In “Art of Literature, Citizenship and Statelessness,” Evgeny Shtorn interrogates the imaginative and political scope for autoethnographic writing in exile. Working from a Direct Provision Centre (Asylum Centre) on the outskirts of Dublin, Shtorn figures his autoethnographic, documentary prose as “performing a different regime of citizenship,” one where “statelessness has no place and where the very state of being an ‘outsider’ no longer makes any sense at all.” Having never planned to do so, Shtorn finds himself writing documentary prose where his “voice is reflective of many other voices” compelling him to stand outside of himself in order to tell a relational, multi-voiced story of ‘belonging’ and citizenship—one that features the values of solidarity alongside feelings of love, pain and pleasure, simultaneously charting a narrative space between what he calls the “the abandoned past and the elusive future.”

Reflections on statelessness also permeate Basel Zaraa’s intervention, “As Far as Art Will Take Me.” Drawing on his own conflicting relationship to statelessness, having grown up in the Palestinian camp, Yarmouk, in Damascus, Zaraa embarks on an autoethnographic journey. He reflects on how the interactive live art installation *As Far as My Fingertips Take Me* (produced in collaboration with artist Tania El Khoury), together with his performing in the Palestinian hip-hop group Katibeh Khamesh, enabled him to survive and tell a comparative story about displacement. The ambivalence surrounding his own British citizenship—acquired in 2016—is both liberating and painful, since his parents continue to live in Syria without formal citizenship. Yet art allows Zaraa the means to render intimate his own intergenerational Palestinian story, enacting a form of healing through the exchange of trans-local experiences of displacement with increasingly global audiences.

In “A Collective Gesture of Civil Demands,” Isabel Lima reflects on a neighbourhood-based intervention called the *Gresham Wooden Horse*—a

durational project conducted by Lima over several years, which included “a five-meter tall wooden horse...[being] unleashed onto the streets of Middlesbrough.” This work was first conceived as a response to austerity, failed regeneration and the UK migration policies of a ‘hostile environment.’ The aim of this participatory project was to sow the seeds for a newly imagined civil space via the performance of slow acts of resistance and local solidarity. The collaborative building of the horse initially served as a catalyst for the cultivation of coalitions, between citizens and non-citizens alike, or, as Lima suggests, facilitated a coming together *in difference*. Many of these alliances among ‘activist citizens’ continue to this day to form the basis of a Neighbourhood Plan that is led and produced by the local communities, setting out a vision for the area and containing policies for the use and development of local land.

In the final provocation of the first section of the volume, “Performing Citizenship: Mickey Mouse and Activism in Egypt,” filmmaker and journalist Hossam Fazulla similarly reflects on innovative ways of enacting radical democratic citizenship, but in authoritarian spaces that leave little room for resistance, or what Fazulla calls “conventional activism.” This narrowing sphere for freedom of speech is navigated through new forms of activism, using direct parody and satire or creative street games instigated by children that are then reframed and amplified online. In this context, creative activism is mobilised by those who have “no part,” yet, as Fazulla claims, have found a way to register the invisible visible through a mode of playful, powerful opposition. These activist collectives manage to regroup via a reclaiming of public, civil and civic space despite increasing restrictions on democracy and the ‘right to have rights.’

The second section of the volume comprises longer, more sustained engagements with the intersection of migrant and refugee artistic practices and radical democratic citizenship. Contributors focus on the ways in which socially engaged practice—by enabling an exploration of embodied, tacit and sensual ethnographies within situated narratives of migration and displacement—can mobilise a reimagining of democratic citizenship. Many allude to or engage directly with a range of participatory, autoethnographic and performative approaches as modes for enacting and radically rethinking the very meaning of democratic citizenship. Several of these contributors are visual and live art practitioners, dramaturges or curators, with others moving between the independent art sphere and academia or located in academia but co-creating with artists. All are in some way shaped by diverse trajectories of migration, either first- or second-generation, or are part of a wider ‘neo-diaspora’ as Abbas Zahedi coins it (in the conversation to follow with Dominik Czechowski).

Yet migration does not provide a homogenous anchor; significantly, the chapters and the shorter provocations differentially draw upon a range of experiences, creative practices, case studies and analyses to explore a perfor-

mance of “citizenship as yet-to come.”²⁷ Like the provocations, these chapters testify to the increasingly urgent role that artistic practice might play—as methodology and radical tool—in reimagining the parameters of democratic citizenship. Isin puts it this way:

The gaps—traversed between citizenship (in) theory, citizenship (in) practice, citizenship (in) law, and citizenship (in) acts—are increasingly where articulate, effective languages of everyday politics emerge and are where literary and artistic performances are playing out serious roles.²⁸

In “Performing Migratory Identity via a Trilogy of Works: *Rupture, Asphyxia* and *Suspended*,” Natasha Davis draws on her live artwork to reflect on the loss of citizenship with the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. The lived experience of displacement figures as a central trope in Davis’s work, as does the materialisation of the ‘body’ as a living archive holding knowledge triggered by both memory and trauma. Davis reflects on both her performative art and the performative mode of writing the chapter as constitutive of a radical democratic intervention into the space of citizenship, figuring displacement itself as a site of political autonomy. She narrates her own longitudinal art practice and personal history of exile through a performative form of writing across autoethnography, theory and creative prose, interrogating the central place that displacement has had as an aesthetic device in her work, enabling her to engage with audiences. In this retrospective reading, Davis positions displacement as a key methodological catalyst where the axis between ‘departure and arrival’ are repeatedly foregrounded. As she puts it: “Both exile and performance are lived in the moment but charged and heightened by the memories and embodied experiences of previous departures and arrivals.” For Davis, ‘displacement’ itself constitutes the means through which to travel the conceptual and deeply personal space between “identity, citizenship and [the] crossing [of] borders.”

In “Creative Acts of Citizenship: Performance of Activist Citizenship by Migrant Artists,” Marchewska considers performative and participatory work that aims to expose and reconfigure the parameters of democratic citizenship in the previously mentioned *The Official Unofficial Voting Station* by Han Sifuentes and the work of the collaborative, cross-border group *La Pocha Nostra*, led by Nola Mariano and Guillermo Gómez-Peña. In so doing, Marchewska explores the use of autoethnography by artists who have lived experience of migration, who are ‘non-citizens’ yet are choosing to explore the often hidden ‘acts of citizenship’ underpinning migration journeys. This analysis is further layered by a weaving of Marchewska’s own memories of being an artist and a migrant in the UK, experiencing the alienating bureaucracy of the UK Home Office in a decade when the ‘hostile environment’ was

steadily gaining ground. The use of autoethnography is not merely a research method, but it provides a vital process of narrative “witnessing” serving as a prompt for critical commentary, pedagogy, provocation and participation with audiences—what Marchewska calls an “embrace of vulnerability with purpose.” Like Davis, Marchewska sees herself interpellated as a “citizen of no country” and the artists she engages with as honing a vital vocabulary for radically new scripts, thus “creating the scene,” as Isin puts, for a reimagining of the everyday performance of citizenship.

In “Bridging Citizenship: The Civic Contribution by Artists Impacted by Displacement,” Mary Ann DeVlieg highlights the contribution of artists who have primarily experienced involuntary displacement by evoking the idea of a ‘here and there’ through the form of a ‘bridging citizenship.’ For DeVlieg, who engages from the perspective of international human rights policy: “These [artists] bridge the culture and values of their homeland, the experiences of externally-obliged migration and transition to one or sometimes more countries, and of relocation in a host country with its own culture and values.” Her concept of “bridging” draws upon Isin and Saward’s analysis of “activist citizenship” as the means through which new forms of political participation are imagined and where rights claims come about. Like Fazulla, DeVlieg focuses on the specific issue of freedom of speech for artists who have experienced the harsh end of state restrictions on human rights in their countries of origin—categorised as ‘artists at risk’ in some sectors. Whilst their artwork does not narrowly explore the subject of displacement—nor might they be comfortable with the definition of ‘artist-at-risk’—these artists’ work is often, DeVlieg proposes, by its virtual embodied enactment a radical “citizenship act.” Shaped by the cultural habitus of the place from which they have been forced to leave, together with the experience of displacement and the observation and confrontation of the ‘host’ context, their lives and associated work is a ‘real-time demonstration’ of the intricate fault lines of contemporary democratic citizenship.

In “Migrants Performing Citizenship: Participatory Theatre and Walking Methods for Research,” Umut Erel, Erene Kaptani, Maggie O’Neill and Tracey Reynolds draw on their Participatory Arts and Social Action Research (PASAR) project to explore how participatory methodologies can facilitate critical engagement with existing citizenship regimes, and, in turn, enact a radical rethinking of the meaning of democratic citizenship. In this durational project (conducted approximately over two years), the boundaries between researcher and participant are dissolved, or at least the categories of ‘researchers’ and ‘research participants’ and ‘migrants’ and ‘citizens’ are significantly challenged. The participants, mainly migrant mothers with ‘no recourse to public funding’ are, as Erel puts it, negatively defined by the UK immigration system as “incompetent citizens.” Yet what it means to be a “full

citizen,” these authors suggest, is always “subject to struggles.” Through coproduction with research participants, this collaborative research opens spaces for “rights claims” to be amplified—with the longitudinal research *in itself* acting as a form of “citizenship practice.” Utilising theatre and walking methodologies that pivot around concepts of “belonging” and “place-making,” the project also includes intergenerational and diverse voices with the inclusion of young migrant women together with policymakers, arts practitioners and activists working alongside the academic research team. The notion of who has the right to become a political subject is repeatedly tested and rehearsed via methods of dramaturgy and performativity (echoing Isin). In its totality, this project aims to give centre stage to a public debate about a policy intentionally configured to punish and further “marginalise and silence migrant families”; yet in its creative design and logic of cooperative enactment, this project opens spaces to contest that very silencing via a collective “claiming [of] the right to equal participation” by the research participants—migrant women—themselves.

The penultimate chapter, “The Ground Is What We Have in Common—Solidarity Without Similarity,” takes the form of a conversation between Polish curator Dominik Czechowski and second-generation Iranian artist Abbas Zahedi. Czechowski’s questions circle around the notion of “flexible citizenship” and what he posits as a defining feature of Abbas’s methodology, “performing citizenship-as hospitality-as artistic-practice.” Czechowski asks Zahedi to reflect on the future of citizenship beyond a “time of illiberal democracy.” In response, Zahedi draws upon his experience as a spoken word poet and hip-hop artist, explaining how the tone, rhythm and accented voice(s), together with the deliberate cuts and silences of that art form, have resulted in a mode of code-switching that is central to his work. Zahedi rejects labels like “British Muslim, or a child of immigrants to the UK, or anything to do with ‘identity politics’” and silos. Instead, the term “neo-diaspora” allows Zahedi to challenge categories imposed from without, hence situating his practice within a more ‘liquid’ (borrowing from Zygmunt Bauman) social, political and cultural landscape. For Zahedi (mixing performance, installation, moving image and writing), democracy and radical citizenship are enacted through the specific (mostly forgotten) acts and skills of ‘hosting’ (such as gestures of invitation and participation), thus opening public ground for a coming together in the context of mutual aid and solidarity. Czechowski suggests that Zahedi’s socially engaged practice offers a vital “testing ground/lab for democracy and self-criticality.”

In “For a Return to Radical Agency: A Critique of the Fetish for ‘Humanising’ Migrant Narratives in the Arts,” the dramaturge, activist and researcher Hassan Mahamdallie argues for the activation of a radical new humanism that vociferously eschews expressions of empathy with the Other via modes of

storytelling that merely serve as alibis for what he calls a “conditional citizenship.” Quoting Nasrine Malik, Mahamdallie suggests that “‘humanising’ is a tricky business” dependent on tactics that cast migrants and refugees within parable-like “morality tales,” regularly imbibing tropes of either positivity or pity. The media and art world has increasingly fallen prey to such patronising acts of humanising, writes Mahamdallie, by unwittingly perpetrating or making invisible the epistemic violence underpinning a deep-seated colonial imaginary. “Perhaps citizenship is the problem not the solution,” he asks, given the history of brutal exclusions associated with its status in the West. Perhaps even the attempt to think about more radical forms of citizenship cannot escape the realities of this blatantly unequal history. As with several of the other contributors to this volume, Mahamdallie turns to dramaturgy to rewrite the script and “create the scene” in relation to exclusionary regimes of citizenship. He sees the theatre space as a “playground of dangerous ideas,” and like Zahedi, Erel et al., Davis, Janković and Olărescu, the *ground* onto which citizenship can be reconfigured and “where the outer limits of truth can be put into play, possibilities pursued, and human consequences revealed.” Stories are not necessarily “virtuous in and of themselves,” writes Mahamdallie, but the means through which “human traits, thoughts and actions” are questioned and challenged, “put to the test by external circumstances.” These external circumstances are central to Mahamdallie’s writing and theatre practice, which is informed throughout by his own family history and the comparative writings of Fanon, Arendt and Baldwin, thus critically and proactively crossing borders in its creative architecture and narrative scope.

Many of the essays and provocations in this volume were commissioned before the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, with the exception of the Czechowski/Zahedi conversation and Mahamdallie’s chapter. The issues and questions raised throughout, however, in both the short provocations and chapters, deeply resonate and are rendered starkly visible by the pandemic, especially in relation to rights claims around racial and economic justice. The economic crisis on the back of the health crisis has led and will undoubtedly lead to greater political instability and restrictions on democracy and civil liberties—on who plays ‘a part’ and who does not. As stated previously, there is no formulaic consensus about the role that artists, who have experience of migration and displacement, might play in the reconfiguring of what we mean by citizenship. At this critical moment in time, the instantiations and interventions throughout rightly indicate a healthy diversity of opinions, methodologies, agencies, locations and cultural identities. Taken together, however, they offer critical, creative and ever-more-urgent ways of exposing the exclusionary nature of legal and political citizenship regimes, enabling us to envision and project radical alternatives to the established parameters of contemporary citizenship and democracy.

NOTES

1. Engin F. Isin, "Citizenship in flux: the figure of the activist citizen," *Subjectivity* 29 (2009): 371.
2. Isin, "Citizenship in flux," 371.
3. Isin, "Citizenship in Flux," 371–72.
4. Jacques Rancière, Davide Panagia and Rachel Bowlby, "Ten Theses on Politics," *Theory and Event* 5, no. 3 (2001) <https://doi.org/10.1353/tae.2001.0028>.
5. Isin, "Citizenship in Flux," 370–71.
6. Engin F. Isin, "Theorizing Acts of Citizenship," in *Acts of Citizenship*, ed. Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Nielson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 39.
7. Isin, "Citizenship in Flux," 371.
8. Isin, "Citizenship in Flux," 379.
9. Isin, "Citizenship in Flux," 381.
10. Engin F. Isin, "Citizens without Frontiers," *openDemocracy*, 15 October 2012, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/citizens-without-frontiers/>.
11. Isin, "Citizens without Frontiers," 2012.
12. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum Press, 2004), 7.
13. Patrick Craig, "Jacques Rancière, Thomas Hobbes, and a Politics of the Part That Has No Part," *Theory and Event*, 18, no. 1 (2015), muse.jhu.edu/article/566088.
14. Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 7.
15. Craig, "Jacques Rancière."
16. Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 86–87.
17. Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 121.
18. Daniel Bensaid, "Permanent Scandal," in *Democracy in What State?* ed. Giorgio Agamben (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 32.
19. Rancière, Panagia, Bowlby, "Ten Theses."
20. Craig, "Jacques Rancière." In their discussion of politics, Rancière, Panagia and Bowlby distinguish between politics and police. They articulate the distinction in the following way. There are, they write, "two ways of counting the parts of a community: The first only counts empirical parts—actual groups defined by differences of birth, by different functions, locations, and interests that constitute the social body. The second counts 'in addition' to a part of the no-part. We will call the first *police* and the second *politics*" (Rancière, Panagia, Bowlby, "Ten Theses").
21. Rancière, Panagia, Bowlby, "Ten Theses."
22. Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 8.
23. Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum Press, 2010), 142.
24. Rancière, *Dissensus*, 142.
25. For a range of debates and an overview of projects associated with socially engaged practice or social practice (the latter as it is called in the United States), see *Field: A Journal of Socially Engaged Art Criticism* (University of California Institute

for Research in the Arts [UCIRA]), and Tom Finkelpearl's *What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation* (Duke: Duke University Press, 2013).

26. Engin F. Isin, "Doing Rights with Things: The Art of Becoming Citizens," in *Performing Citizenship. Performance Philosophy*, ed. P. Hildebrandt, K. Evert, S. Peters, M. Schaub, K. Wildner and G. Ziemer (Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2019), 53.

27. Isin, "Doing Rights," 52.

28. Isin, "Doing Rights," 53.

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